



IN THE FIELD



“Forestry is interesting to me intellectually,” asserts Phillip Chi a silviculture forestry technician on the Sisters Ranger District of the Deschutes National Forest. “But it’s also something that I really don’t mind doing as a job.”

As a forestry technician in silviculture, the science of cultivating healthy trees, Chi works largely on reforestation, running the tree planting program on the Sisters Ranger District. In his third year with the Deschutes National Forest, Chi has been working for the U.S. Forest Service for six years. Although Chi grew up backpacking, camping and hiking, it wasn’t until he was in midst of his undergraduate studies at the University of Washington that he got interested in forestry as a career. Chi went on to earn a Master of Science degree in forest ecology from the University.

Following the completion of his education, Chi accepted a seasonal position with the Pacific Northwest Research Station, working on Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) in Washington’s Northern Cascades. Chi completed backcountry inventory of trees to help project the health and size of these stands in the years to come.

During this time, Chi completed an assignment that he remembers both as his favorite, as well as, most terrifying. While conducting an inventory in the Henry M. Jackson Wilderness of the North Cascades National Park, Chi commuted to his job site by helicopter. He had a precious few hours to navigate into the plot, get his work done and return to the predetermined pick-up site before the ship arrived.



Phillip Chi

Forestry Technician (Silviculture)

DESCHUTES
National
Forest

“Flying in and out of the project site was pretty intense, but the views and setting were incredible,” reflects Chi, who recalls many hours of bushwhacking to find his plots. “We were going where people usually don’t.”

Following his season in inventory, Chi moved to the Umatilla National Forest in southeastern Washington, working as a permanent seasonal forestry technician in silviculture for a couple seasons. Since accepting a full-time permanent position on the Deschutes, Chi works year-around to ensure he’s doing his part to maintain healthy trees.

During the spring, Chi focuses on tree planting, working with contractors to complete pre-determined plots of reforestation. Summer, Chi’s field season, usually finds him in the office by 6:30 a.m. preparing to head out



with his crew to work on implementing restoration efforts. During the winter, Chi prepares for the following field season, working on contracting, National Environmental Policy Act documentation, as well as, reviewing data from the previous field season.

The Pole Creek Fire Reforestation Project has been Chi's largest endeavor since coming to the Deschutes. While not all of his projects are as high caliber as Pole Creek, to Chi the smaller projects are just as important. He also enjoys a variety of other tasks, including tree climbing to collect white bark pine seeds, an opportunity Chi relishes; which might not be a surprise, given his passion for rock climbing.

"My hobbies definitely gave me a love for nature and taught me to value public lands," relates Chi.

"Working for the Forest Service gives me a sense of service and allows me to give back to the community while taking care of the land. These are the core aspects that make it worth it."

For those looking to get into silviculture with the Forest Service, Chi values a good education, but also highly recommends getting practical experience. While still in school he gained a variety of experiences by working on a fire crew, doing fish sampling, completing fuels research, as well as, research on his own and with his professors. Chi also suggests having a solid grasp on outdoor skills, including: how to dress, keep hydrated, eat well, maintain fitness, use geographic information systems (GIS), and understand maps. Finally, Chi says it never hurts to be well-versed in public speaking and writing skills.

"We're here not for the pay or because this is easy, believes Chi. "We do it because we love the land and we're trying to serve it, and the people, as best we can with what we're given."